



FREEDOM NOW

Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan

## Joint Statement

# Afghanistan: From Shadows to Spotlight: Afghan Women Amid Taliban Oppression | International Women's Day Manifesto 2024

8 March 2024

The repressive and escalating attacks on the rights of women and girls by the Taliban since their illegal seizure of power in August 2021 have given rise to a deepening crisis, marked by a continuous deterioration of the situation. The severity of this crisis is underscored by [UN experts](#) who describe it as both gender persecution and gender apartheid, prompting an urgent call for accountability. On International Women's Day, we, the undersigned organisations, urgently appeal to the international community to significantly bolster its support and actively safeguard the human rights of Afghan women and girls, including Afghan women human rights defenders who face persecution for their peaceful campaigns for rights and basic freedoms.

In 2023, the Taliban further intensified its oppressive policies toward women, girls, the LGBTIQ+ community, and religious minorities. Afghan women and girls have seen their rights and prospects increasingly curtailed, from greater enforcement of restrictions on education – including a ban on girls attending secondary schools and universities – to intensifying exclusion of women from [political and public life](#). Women have been banned from a growing list of forms of paid employment, and [economic barriers](#), such as the ban on women [registering organisations](#) and [undergoing vocational training](#), have contributed to a sharp decline in women's participation to the labour market, impeding their right to make a living. This exacerbates financial insecurity, widens gender disparities, and further confines women to the private sphere. Lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women face severe threats, including torture, sexual violence, forced marriage, and death. Victims of gender violence, including those who identify as such, lack minimal legal and practical support. [Obstacles to healthcare](#) and education has exacerbated poverty and vulnerability among women and girls. In 2023, new discriminatory restrictions imposed by the Taliban included the closure of all beauty salons, blocking women from overseas travel for study, mandating female

health workers in some areas to have a male chaperone while traveling or at work, and prohibiting women from entering a famous national park.

The oppressive environment extends to female activists, NGO leaders and journalists. Notable cases include the arrests of women's rights activists [Neda Parwani and Zholia Parsi](#), the enforced disappearance and subsequent discovery of [Manizha Seddigi](#) in Taliban custody to date, the arrest of [Matiullah Wesa](#), founder of an NGO advocating for girls' education rights, and the arbitrary detainment of [Ahmad Fahim Azimi and Seddiqullah Afghan](#)—both dedicated girls' education activists, among many others. Journalists reporting on the Taliban, [facing arrests and threats](#), equally illustrate the difficulties encountered by the media, particularly women, when covering crimes against women or advocating for women's rights. Collectively, these cases underscore the near-total denial of freedom of expression, gender equality, or any other internationally recognized right in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

Amid this growing oppression, segregation and fear, Afghan women human rights defenders have urged the international community to exert greater pressure on the Taliban. They call on international bodies to involve Afghan women in all negotiations with the Taliban, and to facilitate direct meetings between women and the *de facto* authorities to address their concerns. Afghan women have also stressed the importance of advocacy for women's rights by external actors, based on the voices and realities of women inside Afghanistan. They call for coordinated efforts between organisations inside and outside the country to defend the rights of Afghan women and girls.

On this International Women's Day, the members of the Alliance for Human Rights in Afghanistan call on the International Community for the followings:

- Act in solidarity and unified voice to address the ongoing repression Afghan women and girls are facing.
- Ensure, as called for in UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women in all decision-making processes on the national and international level.
- Call for justice and accountability for all crimes committed against women and girls in Afghanistan through mechanisms including: the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.
- Urge donors to fully fund the UN-led humanitarian appeal for Afghanistan.

### **The Alliance:**

In response to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban's illegal seizure of power on 15 August 2021, several human rights

organizations came together in March 2022 to establish the '[Alliance for Human rights in Afghanistan](#)' with an aim to collectively monitor the dire human rights situation in Afghanistan and advocate for the protection of human rights and accountability for all violations and abuses. Through this alliance, the member organizations collaborate on joint advocacy, research, awareness raising, and mobilization, as well as on documentation and reporting of human rights violations and abuses in Afghanistan.

## **SIGNATORIES**

Amnesty International

Front Line Defenders

Freedom House

Freedom Now

Human Rights Watch

MADRE

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).